[1] reporter, Mark Kinver Environment, and B. B. C. News. “Survey Reveals Showering Habits.” *BBC News*. Accessed May 21, 2014. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-15836433.

[Words: 518]

Mark Kinver is an environment reporter for the BBC. He has worked for the BBC in this capacity from November 2005, before which he filled the role of a broadcast journalist from February 2001. Prior to his time with the BBC Mr. Kinver was a researcher for Green Futures magazine, a position he held from 1998 to 2000.

Mr. Kinver’s article focuses on research conducted by Unilever, specifically the duration of the average shower for a set of 100 families in the United Kingdom over a 10-day period. This information was being collected by Unilever in an effort to give insight as to how the company’s products were being used. Surprisingly, the study found that the average shower length of the test subjects was 8 minutes, approximately twice as long as the previously accepted average of five minutes. “According to the data, an eight-minute shower used 62 litres of hot water, compared with an average bath's 80 litres.” This is interesting to find out, considering our perception of showers vs. baths: “ ‘Most people have now got the message that, generally, taking a shower is more environmentally friendly than a bath, but what this research shows is this is not necessarily the case.’ “ The article also goes on to speculate about the cost of the average showering habits of a UK family for a year, finding that the average household spends £416 ($700) showering (£916 if using a power shower). The article sums the findings up by suggesting that “when lathering up think about turning the flow off until you are ready to rinse." This is useful in cutting down the family’s water bill, but also useful in preserving what limited amount of potable water we have access to on Earth.

One area the article could have gone into more detail is in the numbers associated with the consumption of resources. For example, the article recognizes that showers consume water, and even goes so far as to mention that a shower “wastes not only water, but also the energy needed for heating the water too.” However, a number associated with the consumption of energy for heating the water goes unmentioned. Given the nature of the article as a news piece this is perhaps unexpected however. An additional area where these figures would have proven useful is in the claim made by “Hilde Hendrickx, a behavioural scientist in Unilever's R&D department. [She stated] ‘We know that 95% of the associated greenhouse gas emissions are related to people [using] our products because they have to use hot water.’ " While this is an interesting figure to consider, there is no mention of, or attempt to calculate what the greenhouse gas emissions per person are. This again, would be useful data to have.

Overall, this article helps make the case that too much water is being consumed during the average shower. The closeness in environmental impact between the average bath and shower is startlingly close. Of definite merit, is the recommendation the article makes, to turn off bathing water when lathering, and only use the water for rinsing if possible.

[2] Dimitrova Russo, Daniella, and Todd Myers. “Should Cities Ban Plastic Bags?” Wall Street Journal - Eastern Edition 260, no. 83 (October 8, 2012): R5–R6.

[Words: 560]

Daniella Dimitrova Russo is co-founder and executive director of the Plastic Pollution Coalition, a global alliance of businesses, organizations and individuals working together to end plastic pollution and its toxic impacts on people, animals and the environment. [1] Todd Myers is environmental director at the Washington Policy Center, and author of Eco-Fads: How the Rise of Trendy Environmentalism is Harming the Environment.

The article written for the Wall Street Journal, discusses two opposing opinions of plastic bags: Ms. Russo believes the use of plastic bags should be banned, Mr. Myers believes that plastic bags are the less costly alternative, and are saving society money in the long-run. The article starts with Ms. Russo’s opinion, beginning with claims that plastic bags are harming sea life. She states “discarded plastic bags float in the ocean, they tumble in the desert, they are found in riverbeds and dams. They kill off marine animals that confuse the bags with plankton and jellyfish; they end up calcified in the stomachs of animals on land.” She claims however, that while this damage is of great consequence, the greatest plastic bag-related damage is economic, that the cost of recycling the plastic bag is excessive, and costs tax payers more money overall. As Ms. Russo states, the options are pretty simple: choose to not do anything about the plastic bags and you will be swimming in garbage, or choose to recycle the plastic bags and spend millions of tax dollars. More specifically, Russo quotes figures that San Jose reports that it costs about $1 million a year to repair recycling equipment jammed with plastic bags. San Francisco estimates that to clean up, recycle and landfill plastic bags costs as much as $8.5 million a year.” This is certainly compelling evidence for why plastic bags should be banned, but Ms. Russo continues with the apprixmate per-person savings at the grocery store, saying “a ban would save approximately $18 to $30 per person annually.”

Mr. Myers claims that the NOAA “says there are currently no published studies about how many marine mammals die because of marine debris,” dissolving the argument that plastic bags kill ocean life. Mr. Myers continues by stating “cities like San Francisco and Toronto have found that less than 1% of their litter consists of plastic bags,” and that for Washington state, “the state budget for all litter cleanup is about $7 million,” which indicates that recycling plastic bags may cost less than we believe.

Although this article argues both sides of the problem, the discrepancy in accurate data indicates that there is more work to be done, and that at the very least plastic bags are not likely helping the situation. If we are to believe Ms. Russo, plastic bags are extremely costly to the taxpayer. If Mr. Myers’ side of the story is more correct, then “consumers would have to use a cotton bag 173 times before they match the energy savings of one plastic bag, assuming 40% of bags are reused.”

There seems to be quite a discrepancy with regards to the cost of the plastic bag to the consumer. However, regardless of who is more correct both sides agree that plastic bags do have some

environmental impact. Given this, there is no reason to use bags that are already in our possession, like a backpack or previously used plastic, paper, or cotton bag.

References:

[1] http://www.daniellarusso.org/#!c-work/c1ger